

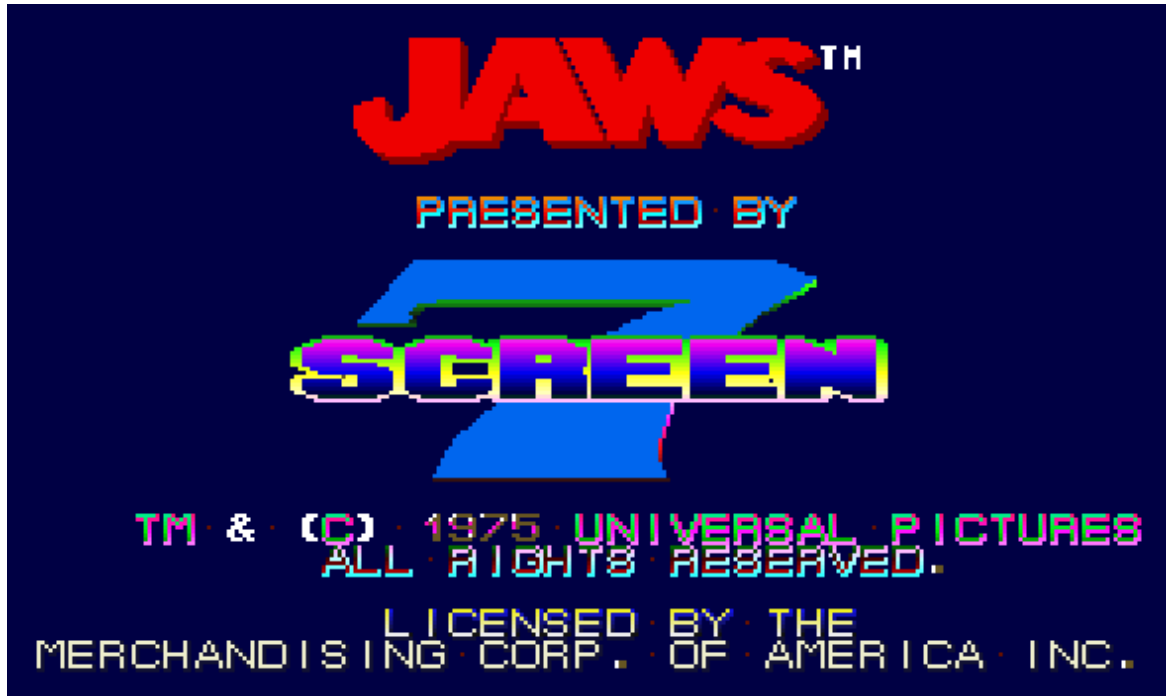
Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the disk box

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

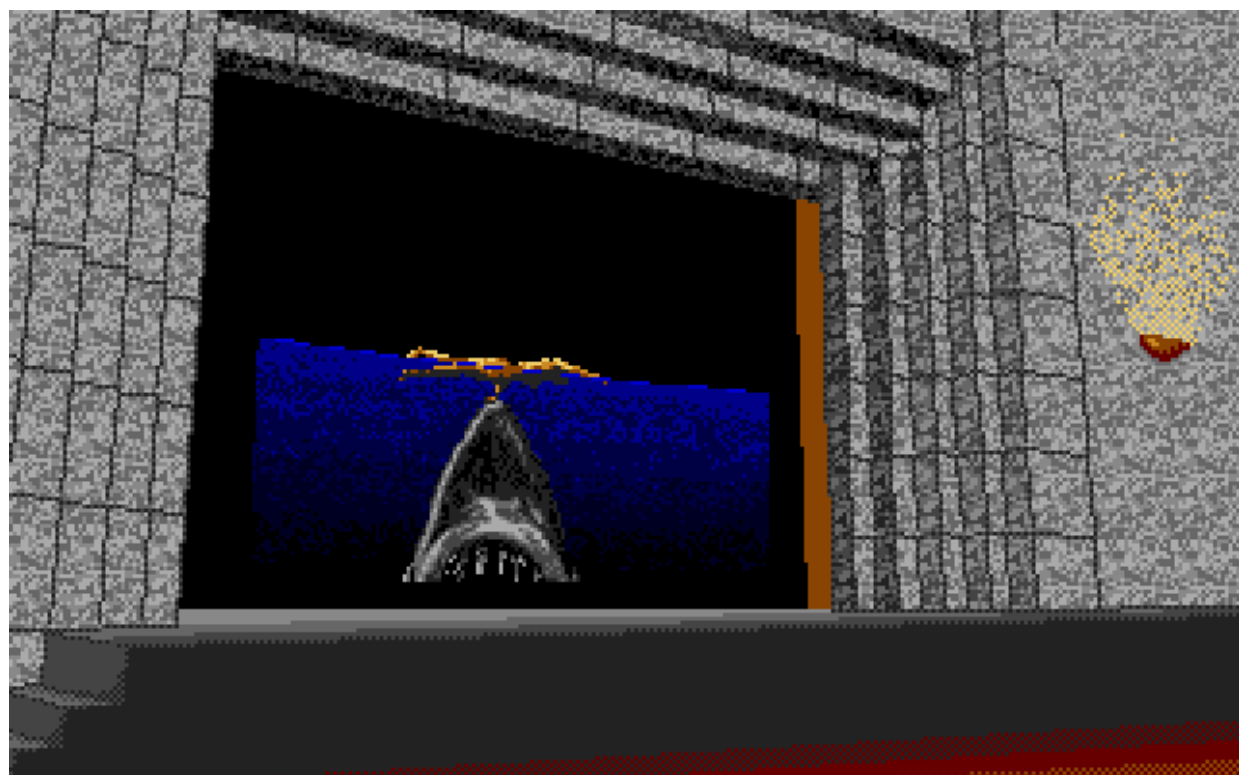
Had the Amiga been around in 1975 there's no doubt in movie to game adaptation terms that Jaws would have been catch of the day. With a meagre budget of \$9m it broke new ground in cinematic history being the first film to gross \$100m at the box office, a record it held until a little known space opera called Star Wars kicked over its sandcastle in 1977. The summer blockbuster was born. This territorial, rogue great white shark based on the 1974 novel by Peter Benchley, directed by the then 26-year-old Steven Spielberg started it all! A shame then that the furore had largely ebbed away by the time the Amiga had discarded its inflatable armbands and begun to swim as an independent consumer games system well over ten years later.

By 1989 when Screen 7 (formerly Martech responsible for Samantha Fox Strip Poker, Vixen and Eddie Kidd Jump Challenge) secured the rights to produce the game of the same name, the license must have been going for a song. I'd be surprised if there was even anyone else in the running. Well surely there *can't* have been or *they'd* have got it Instead!



Screen 7 commissioned developmental duties to 'Intelligent Design Ltd', a decision and moniker that was pleading to be mocked from the outset. Confidence can take you a long way in this business, yet sooner or later you'll be called upon to back it up with something we scientifically-minded types like to refer to as 'evidence'. Gosh, I wonder if they delivered a treasure trove of pixelated wonderment, or only a half-baked map of broken promises. Stay tuned to find out landlubbers!

(Cliffhanger interlude ... review will commence momentarily)



What they produced was a sub-aquatic shooter with extremely light pseudo-strategy elements loosely weaved around the core themes of the movie. Sadly, one thing that made the movie so appealing and enduring - the *human* ingredients - are completely lacking so it feels like a barren wasteland on the emotional connection front.



Not this one, this is just a cutesy ickle baby.

As in the movie, the New England, Amity Island tourist hotspot is under siege from the notorious 'Carcharodon carcharias', only rather than relying on police chief, New Yorker Martin Brody, local fisherman and aquatic bounty hunter, Quint, and oceanographer, Matt Hooper, to quell it, Mayor Vaughn calls in a professional shark assassin with a harpoon. On route to execute the blighter, tempestuous waters shatter his vessel, fragmenting the gun into four

segments, dispersing them into the far reaches of the serpentine caverns beneath the roaring waves.



Quint: (Quint first scratches the chalkboard to get everyone's attention) Y'all know me. Know how I earn a livin'. I'll catch this bird for you, but it ain't gonna be easy. Bad fish. Not like going down the pond chasin' bluegills and tommycods. This shark, swallow you whole. Little shakin', little tenderizin', an' down you go. And we gotta do it quick, that'll bring back your tourists, put all your businesses on a payin' basis. But it's not gonna be pleasant. I value my neck a lot more than three thousand bucks, chief. I'll find him for three, but I'll catch him, and kill him, for ten. But you've gotta make up your minds. If you want to stay alive, then ante up. If you want to play

it cheap, be on welfare the whole winter. I don't want no volunteers, I don't want no mates, there's just too many captains on this island. \$10,000 for me by myself. For that you get the head, the tail, the whole damn thing.



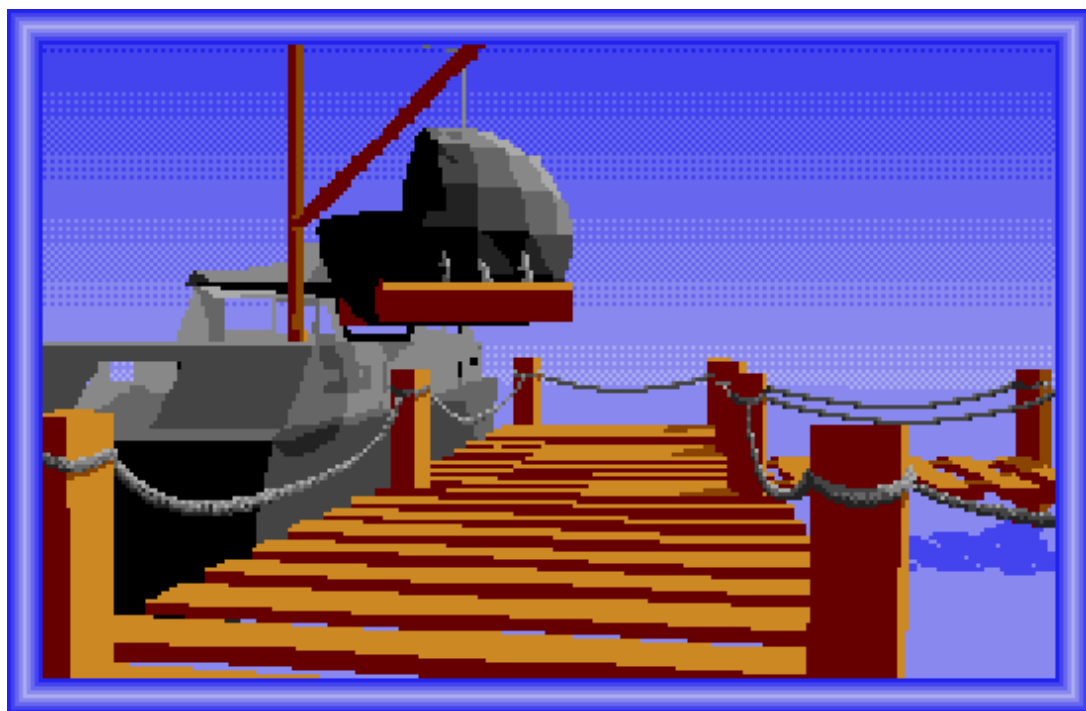
Time for plan B; don't get hold of a shiny new shark skewer, that would be far too easy. No, send in the cavalry to recover the scattered parts of the broken, rusting weapon, rebuild it and introduce Jaws to the sharp end! This of course utterly ignoring proof from the movie that Jaws is immune to harpoons and bullets shot from Brody's police issue pistol. This is the first thing the trio tried and Jaws absorbed them all without flinching! Hmm, that 'Intelligent Design' claim

smells fishy to me. Had they seen the movie or just the poster?

Brody: You're Gonna Need A Bigger Boat.



Back on track and in line with the celluloid, your hotshot crew comprises Brody (that's you), Hooper, Quint and three divers aboard Quint's 'Orca' trawler carrying a reconnaissance pod that's reminiscent of the submarines seen in Jaws 3-D (1983) and The Abyss (1989), though armed with a menagerie of pea-shooter level potency, novelty projectiles not seen in either.





One of the most conspicuous ways in which Jaws the game deviates from the movie, however, concerns the engineering of the 25-foot shark's eventual downfall. For a start, there's no sub in the original film at all. Jaws is ultimately dispatched when Brody rams a pressurised SCUBA tank in its mouth, clambers up the remains of the capsized boat to reach the top of the mast and shoots the volatile diving gear with Quint's rifle, turning the vicious sea monster into explosive sea confetti.

Chief Brody: "Smile you son of a...BITCH!"



All this follows a failed dive in a so-called 'shark-proof' cage where the cunning master plan was to stick Jaws with a hypodermic spear loaded with "20 cc's of strychnine nitrate". Only 'Brucey' saw it coming and decided to wreck the cage instead. Hooper (played by Richard Dreyfuss who was nominated for a best actor BAFTA award) managed to escape through the prised apart bars unharmed, but Jaws continued to ransack the boat and Quint wasn't quite so lucky.

Quint: (seeing Hooper's equipment) What are you? Some kind of half-assed astronaut?

(examining the shark cage)

Quint: Jesus H Christ, when I was a boy, every little squirt wanted to be a harpooner or a sword fisherman. What d'ya have there - a portable shower or a monkey cage?

Hooper: Anti-Shark cage.

Quint: Anti-shark cage. You go inside the cage?

(Hooper nods)

Quint: Cage goes in the water, you go in the water.
Shark's in the water. Our shark.

(sings)

Quint: Farewell and adieu to you, fair Spanish ladies.
Farewell and adieu, you ladies of Spain. For we've
received orders for to sail back to Boston. And so
nevermore shall we see you again.



Bad luck appears to be a theme that pervaded the actor's real life too; Robert Shaw's father was an alcoholic and manic depressive who committed suicide when his son was only 12 years old. Against the odds he grew up to marry a wife who would later succumb to a fatal overdose of barbiturates and alcohol that was speculated to be suicide, yet couldn't be proven one way or the other conclusively.

Robert himself suffered from depression which certainly wouldn't have been eased by money worries that resulted from not earning a bean from his work on Jaws due to tax obligations and having to support his ten children; the progeny of three marriages. Struggling to cope with the tragic death of his second wife, actress Mary Ure, he became a recluse; that heaped upon his existing alcoholism condition he suffered a terminal heart attack aged only 51 years old in 1978. His final cinema role would be Avalanche Express released in 1979.

If you have a light-hearted mood-lifter to get us back on track now's the time to break the seal because my tank is running on fumes after that cheery seque...

Despite the disparities between the two Jaws mediums - game and movie - there are also many correlations. There's an ongoing battle of wills between Brody - man of the people - who wants to keep his community safe at any financial cost, and Mayor Vaughan who is content to gamble with their lives to boost the town's economy, and therein lies the strategy, paddling pool shallow as it is.



Mayor Vaughn: Martin, it's all psychological. You yell, "Barracuda," everybody says, "huh, what?" You yell "Shark," we've got a panic on our hands on the Fourth of July.

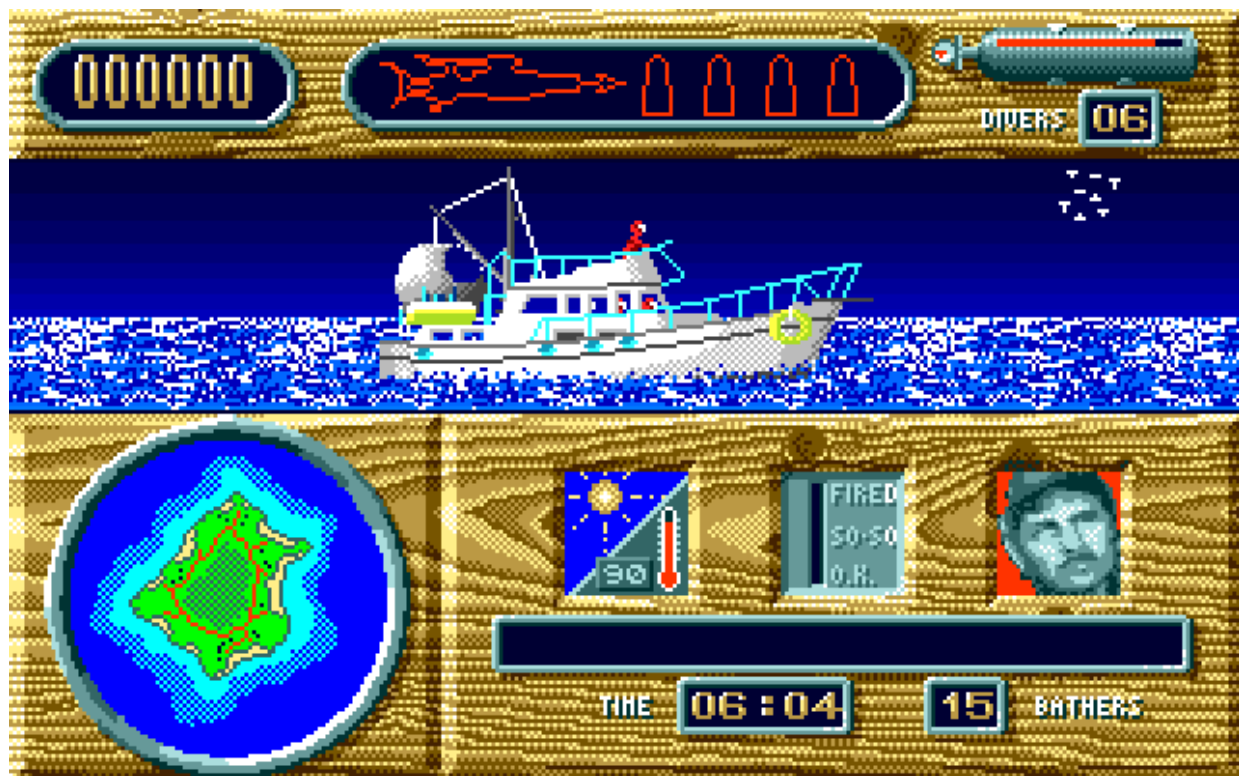
Hooper: I think I am familiar with the fact that you are going to ignore this problem until it swims up and bites you in the ass.

Mayor Vaughn: I'm only trying to say that Amity is a summer town. We need summer dollars. Now, if the people can't swim here, they'll be glad to swim at the beaches of Cape Cod, the Hamptons, Long Island...

Brody: That doesn't mean we have to serve them up as smorgasbord!

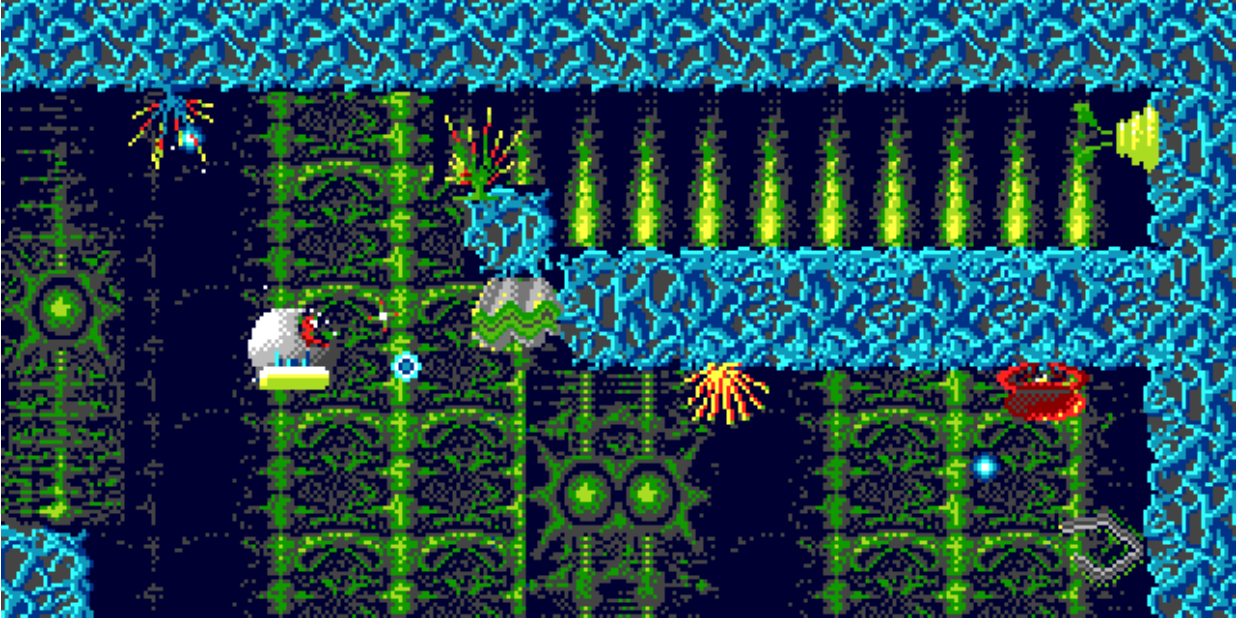


To keep the bathers alive you must monitor the shark sighting reports and close the beaches accordingly, albeit risking the ire of the mayor who won't think twice about firing you if footfall is down, especially with the 50th, July 4th Regatta rapidly approaching. Similarly, the temperature gauge will give you a rough indication as to the likelihood of an attack - it has been noted that these rise in harmony with the mercury. Do nothing on the other hand and there certainly *will* be casualties; tip the balance (15 being the magic number) and the island will be shut down by the authorities entirely... and you know what that means? A fate worse than death. Game over!

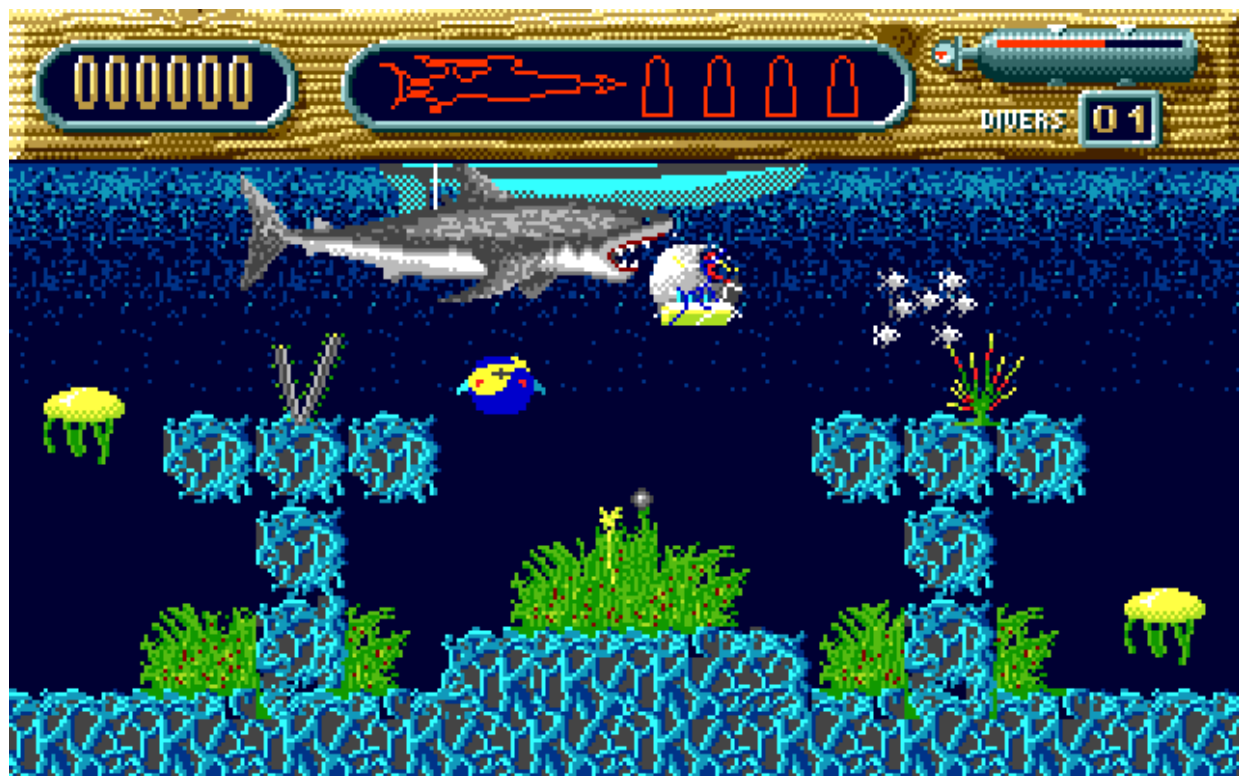


Hooper: Mr. Vaughn, what we are dealing with here is a perfect engine, an eating machine. It's really a miracle of evolution. All this machine does is swim and eat and make little sharks, and that's all. Now, why don't you take a long, close look at this sign.

It actually takes longer to describe the mechanics of the latter than you'll spend with your police chief hat on pondering the effects of your onerous decisions, as the bulk of the monotonous game revolves around exploring your flick-screen underwater surroundings completely cut off from your community. Plunging below the surface from the Orca's deck you'll soon find the ocean underworld is a hostile territory where everything from fish, sea anemone and urchins, octopi, starfish, crab claws protruding from barrier reef, to orb-projecting clamshells is out to thwart your mission.



A *sole* (hoho) collision with an enemy is enough to strike out one of your six lives, whilst a second major threat takes the form of your continually depleting oxygen supply. Each, in turn, can be counteracted by harvesting extra life-sustaining oxygen tanks, or shield power-ups. Coins and jewellery left behind by splattered sea life can be swept up for points, warp portals will whisk you out of harm's way (or possibly *into* it as the case may be), while mines instantly obliterate everything on the screen, clearing your access to the next area.



Occasionally Jaws himself will put in an appearance, yet shouldn't be tackled until you have the harpoon in your possession, unless you intend to end up as shark bait. Strangely he adopts a fairly liberal 'live and let live' policy providing you give him a wide berth! When the time is right you must deploy your 'mega-bullets', landing three - out of a potential four - accurate hits on his snout within a time frame of 80 seconds to send him packing to the great barrier reef in the sky.

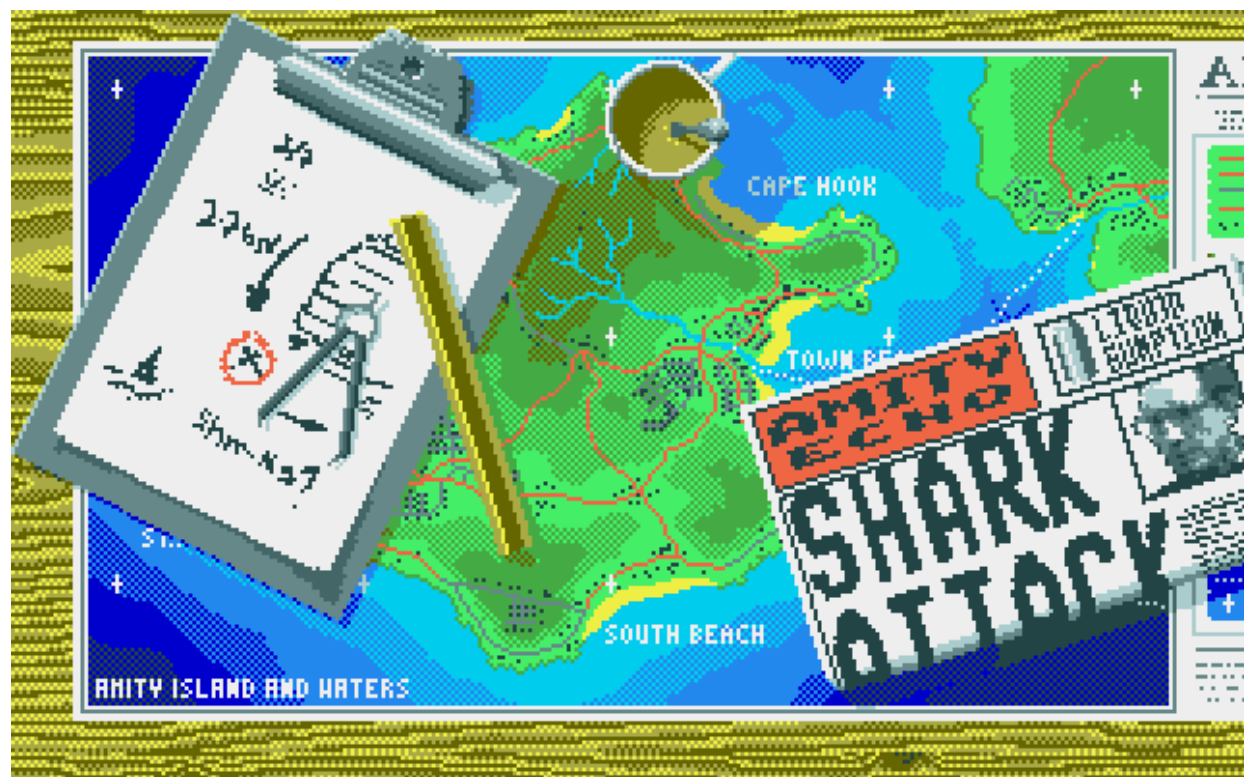
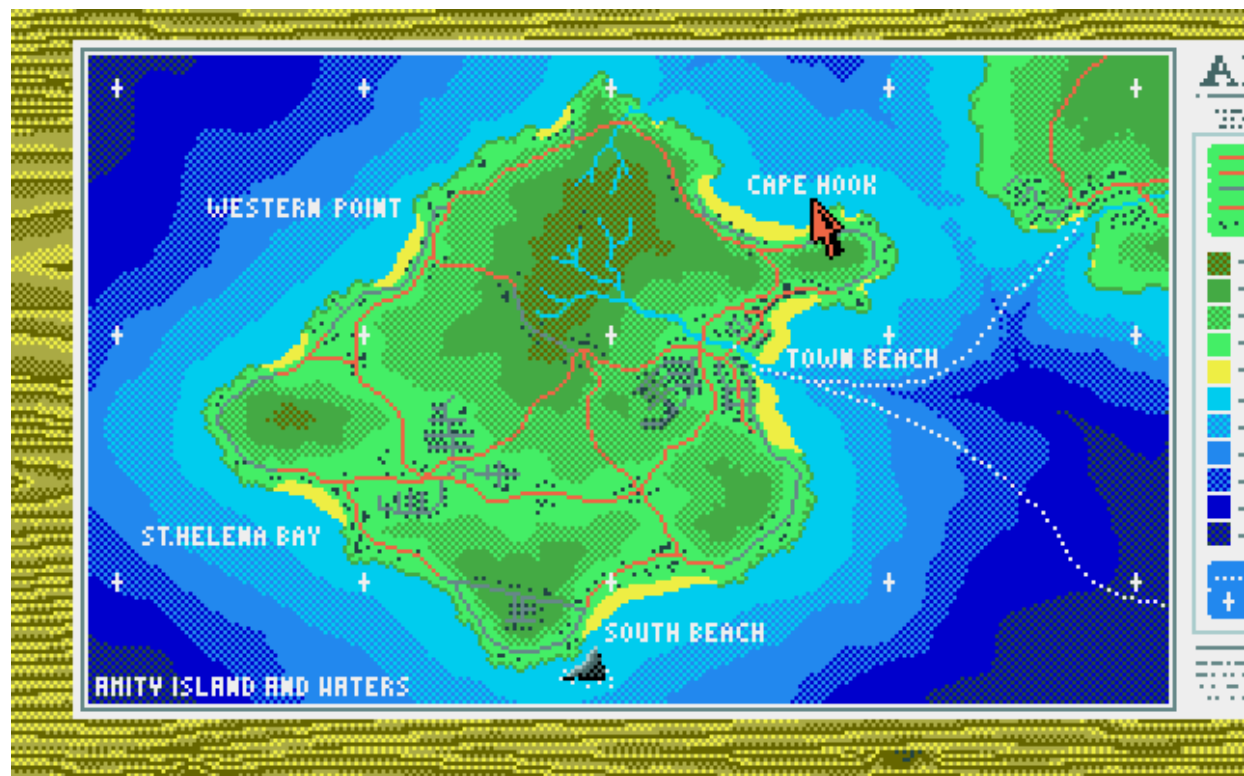


David Whittaker's music, consonantly to in-game shark sightings is extremely sparse, though this could be argued is entirely appropriate given that's the subtle approach the movie took, as much to build suspense as the unforeseen consequence of technical failures and tight budget constraints. Authentic, atmospheric title screen music (an attempt at reproducing John William's original score) is a welcome addition, the lacklustre in-game underwater sound effects in isolation not so much. A toggle to disable Darth Vader's incessant wheezing would have been a major bonus! Why are we even using breathing apparatus *inside* a submarine? Surely it's climate-controlled by default?





In summer 1989 Jaws was simultaneously released for the Atari ST, Amstrad CPC (as depicted in the above screenshots), Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum, and bizarrely enough *wasn't* universally set upon by the critics with a nuclear Navy frigate a thousand miles clear of civilised life. You'd be hardpressed to wedge a razorfish between them, except the map screen is absent in the 8-bit incarnations.

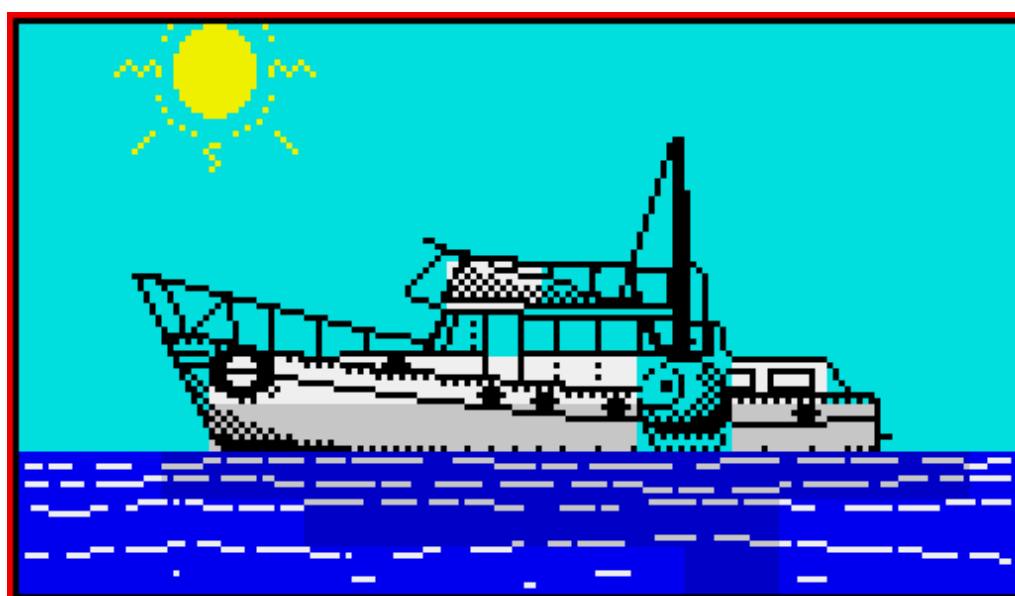


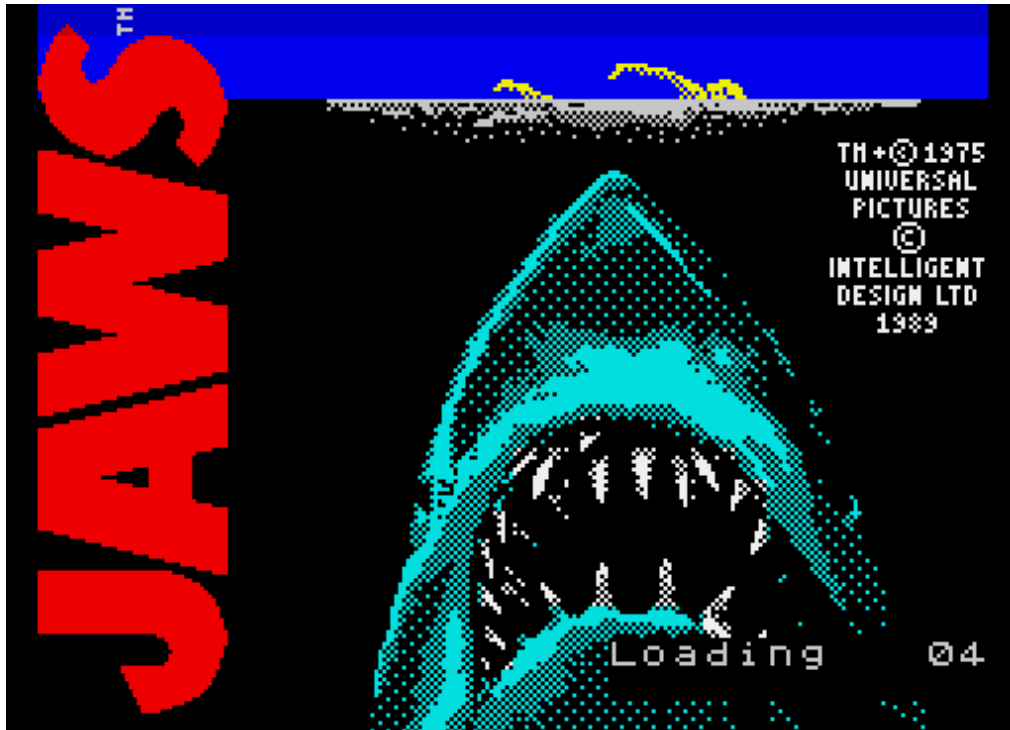
"Graphics are of excellent quality and are similar to Cybernoid in style. The animation on the larger sprites (namely Mr Jaws) is good and all the colours hardly clash. The theme tune is in there too - on the title screen - a bit rusty, but recognisable. It seems that all the gun bits are in the same place each game so once you find them it may lose some addictiveness, but you have still got to battle through the fishies. Overall Jaws offers some good blasting fun."

Crash (80%, July, 1989)

"You have six men, so you get six lives before finally having to give up your fight. You can play for points or prizes and as there are four levels to map and blast your way through there's plenty of gameplay here. The graphics are good, the sound (on the 128) is nice with the Jaws tune and lots of phutty motorboat sounds, and all in all it's a fabbo start for screen 7. Yes I like it! Chomp!"

Your Sinclair (88%, August, 1989)





"Although the gameplay of Jaws isn't original, the whole thing is very well put together and thoroughly entertaining."

Atari ST User (80%, September, 1989)

"For some reason, I had high expectations of Jaws. However, such optimism soon ended when I found myself playing what amounts to little more than a lifeless blasting game and one which requires a lot of dull exploration at that. There are few redeeming features; even the graphics and sound suck! 'Dad' won't be too chuffed if he buys this, let alone others." - **Ian**

"Even with the hole-ridden plot, it should've been possible to create a decent game based on the early Spielberg movie. This, however, is a mish-mash of bad ideas, thrown together with loose connections to the film, the shark itself and far-from-moving music. There's no

atmosphere whatsoever; this is little more than a shoot-'em-up with a map." - **Chris**

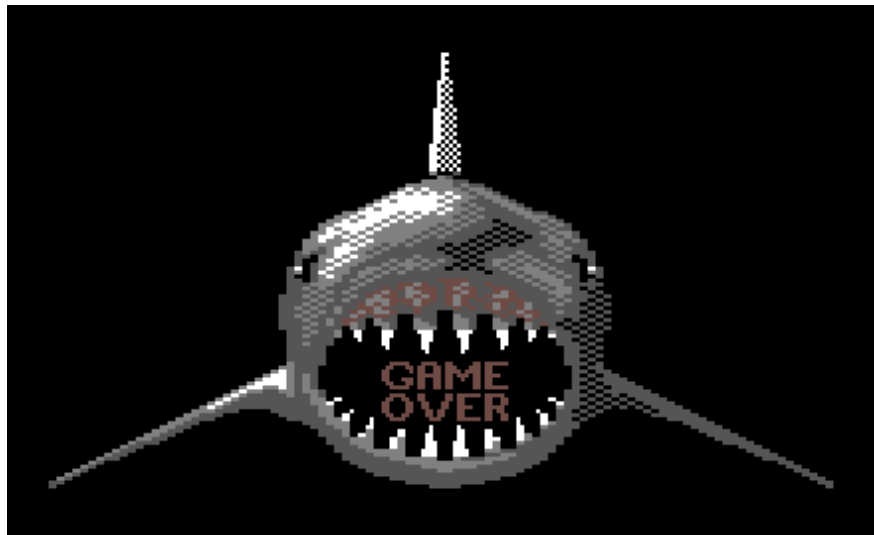
"Hardly lives up to the standards of the film's director."



Amiga Force (33%, December, 1993)

"So much more could, and should, have been made of this license; what we've got has all been seen before and at a cheaper price. It simply isn't interesting or varied enough to keep you playing for long periods; the graphics aren't stunning; the strategy element isn't very deep and the shoot-em-up action is, basically, boring."

ACE (50%, C64, August, 1989)



Despite some positive reviews, I stand by my belief that some salty sea dog should have braved the biting monsoons to stand at the bow of the good ship home micro back in the

early '80s and bellowed into the squall, "we're gonna need a bigger quality control department!"

Even Apidya with a Jaws skin and the great white as the curtain closing nemesis would have been preferable in the absence of something more imaginative.

Do yourselves a favour, stick a 'stay out of the water' warning notice in the sand, grab a bucket of popcorn and rewatch the timeless classic movie for the sixty-third time... to pluck a totally random number out of the hat.